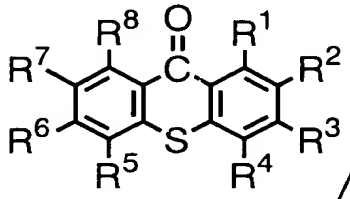
What is claimed is:

1. A positive resist composition which comprises a novolac resin, a radiation-sensitive quinonediazide compound and a thioxanthone compound represented by the following formula (I):



(I)

wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6, R^7 and R^8 independently represent hydrogen, halogen, alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, carboxyl or alkoxycarbonyl.

2. The positive resist composition according to claim 1 wherein amount of components of the novolac resin having a molecular weight of 1,000 or less are 25% or less based on the total amount of the novolac resin excluding unreacted phenol compound, when the amounts are represented by the pattern areas of gel permeation chromatography, wherein the pattern areas refer to values measured by an UV detector at 254 nm and the molecular weight refer to a value based on that of polystyrene as a standard.

3. The positive resist composition according to claim 1 which further comprises a low molecular weight alkali-soluble phenol compound in an amount within a range of 3 to 40% by weight based on the total amount of the novolac resin and the low molecular weight alkali-soluble phenol compound.

4. The positive resist composition according to claim 1 wherein the thioxanthone compound of the formula (I) is selected from thioxanthone, 1-chlorothioxanthone, 2-chlorothioxanthone, 3-chlorothioxanthone, 4-chlorothioxanthone, 1-methylthioxanthone, 2-methylthioxanthone, 3-methylthioxanthone, 4-methylthioxanthone, 1-ethylthioxanthone, 2-ethylthioxanthone, 3-ethylthioxanthone, 4-ethylthioxanthone, 1-isopropylthioxanthone, 2-isopropylthioxanthone, 3-isopropylthioxanthone, 4-isopropylthioxanthone, methyl thioxanthone-1-carboxylate or methyl 7-methylthioxanthone-3-carboxylate.

5. The positive resist composition according to claim 1 or 3 wherein the amount of the thioxanthone compound is about from 0.01 to 5 parts by weight based on 100 parts by total weight of the novolac resin and a low molecular weight alkali-soluble phenol compound.

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